

The Daily Caller: Washington's Budget Blunders

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Posted By Rep. Joe Wilson On February 23, 2010 @ 12:00 am In Opinion, Opinion:Upper Section, Sub1:Opinion | 2 Comments

Reckless, record-breaking spending in Washington is crippling America's financial future. Rhetoric alone is certainly not going to fix the spending spree that lawmakers have taken part in for entirely too long. While it is important to study history so we do not make the same mistakes from our past, I believe the across-the-aisle finger-pointing and arguments about which political party incurred the most debt is nothing but a Washington-style waste of time.

During these trying economic times, American families have gathered around their kitchen tables to reprioritize their family budgets and make cuts where they can. With the national debt continuing to soar — threatening our national security with China as the largest foreign creditor — it is high time that lawmakers gathered at America's kitchen table to make cuts to the federal budget as well?

That may seem like a no-brainer question, but believe it or not, the president recently submitted a budget to Congress that proposes \$10 trillion of new deficit spending, the highest spending levels since World War II, and \$2.8 trillion worth of tax increases over 10 years. This budget proposal is reminiscent of last year's budget that spends too much, taxes too much, and borrows too much.

I think one of the problems is that many people are desensitized to large figures like these because they get thrown around Washington all the time. A "trillion" is so large that it is often difficult to wrap our minds around. In TIME [1], Barbara Kiviat recently highlighted children's book author David Schwartz's approach to wrapping young minds around the concept of large figures.

I thought a children's book author may just be the best messenger when trying to get a spending concept across to lawmakers.

Schwartz says, "One million seconds comes out to be about 11½ days. A billion seconds is 32 years. And a trillion seconds is 32,000 years. I like to say that I have a pretty good idea what I'll be doing a million seconds from now, no idea what I'll be doing a billion seconds from now, and an excellent idea of what I'll be doing a trillion seconds from now."

Another way to wrap your mind around this large spending increase is to think of the amount per individual. To put it in a personal perspective, the amount of proposed debt limit increase is \$6,157 per person and the new debt limit will be \$46,319 per person.

Congress can get serious about reducing these mindboggling figures, but it will first require bipartisanship and an outright dismissal of the president's reckless budget. Next, we need an across-the-board, non-defense spending cut. A 1 percent across-the-board cut will get the ball rolling. Next, we must take President Obama's campaign promise to go "through our federal budget—page by page, line by line—eliminating those programs we don't need, and insisting that those we do operate in a sensible cost-effective way," and turn it into a reality.

If the scalpel was used to go through the 12 appropriations bills worth \$19.6 billion last year, taxpayers might not be on the hook for some of the most egregious projects that make the headlines.

After using the scalpel, the liberal majority should drop their job-killing proposals like a government health care takeover and national energy tax. Instead, Congress should work together to pass tax relief for small businesses and families and on a bill that makes health care more affordable and accessible for all Americans.

Finally, lawmakers must remain committed to battling this spending habit each year. Tough talk only around election time isn't going to be enough—this is going to be a long-term commitment.

If lawmakers do not meet these challenges, I fear this fiscal hole is so deep that my generation will not only fail to dig ourselves out, but we won't even leave our children a shovel with which to escape.

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